

**Lake Michigan Fisheries Team**  
**June 11, 2003**  
**Green Bay**

**Draft Notes**

**Next meeting:** July 17, 2003. USFWS offices, 2661 Scott Tower Drive, New Franken, WI

**Present:** Mark Opgenorth, Pradeep Hirethota, Matt Coffaro, Brad Eggold, Justine Hasz, Paul Peeters, Terry Lychwick, Mike Kitt, Steve Hogler, George Boronow, Al Niebur, Lee Meyers, Mike Toney, Sue Marcquenski, Bill Horns, Mark Holey (USFWS), Rob Elliot (USFWS)

**1) Brief updates**

- Lychwick retirement
- Janssen's research program
- Perch article in Wisconsin Natural Resources
- Regulation of transportation of live game fish
  - Action. Lee Meyers volunteered to work with Tom Hansen on a rule or advisory question for consideration at 2004 spring hearings.
- Al Kaas' stocking guidance
- Boat safety
  - Action. Mike Toney is working on a new Manual Code on boat safety. This will be a discussion item at the next LMFT meeting.
- Boat replacement
- DNR/FWS coordination meeting
  - Action. Mark Holey circulated copies of the draft Great Lakes-Big Rivers Implementation Plan of the USFWS. DNR has until August 1 to comment.
- Rising cost of electronic reporting
- Policy regarding commercial fishers retaining lake trout
- Nomination of Darrell Toliver to LMFF
- Escape of coho salmon from Thunder River.

**2) NRDA project funding**

Background (from agenda). At the April 2 meeting Bill Horns agreed to draft a cover memo and various individuals agreed to draft project briefs for possible NRDA funding. The memo and project briefs will be forwarded to our Guidance Team to help guide the NRDA project development process. The package will not be completed in time for the meeting. Meanwhile some funding decisions have been made, including money for Green Bay yellow perch and a few FWS projects. A version of the Wild Rose project is already in the mix of projects slated for consideration.

Action. Mark Holey provided lists of project funded or approved for funding with Appleton Paper, Inc., and NCR Corporation interim settlement funds. Bill Horns will continue compiling a package of project briefs for projects recommended by the LMFT.

### 3) Closure of smelt trawling on Green Bay – FH-12-03

Background (from agenda). In April the Natural Resources Board adopted Permanent Order FH-12-03, closing commercial smelt fishing on Green Bay. Following legislative hearings in May, the Assembly Natural Resources Committee asked the Department to modify the rule to allow an annual commercial harvest of 100,000 pounds and to retain the current summer trawling season (June 15 – September 30).

Action. The LMFT is not of one mind on this issue. A vote was requested, with the result that, by a three to two vote of the Policy Committee, the LMFT recommends that the Department continue to support the closure of smelt fishing on Green Bay.

### 4) Steelhead bag limits

Background (from agenda). With the recent decision to stock fewer steelhead in the near future, it may be reasonable to reconsider the steelhead bag limit. Steve Hogler points out that even though we will likely sustain current stocking levels in the brood rivers, a reduced bag might help insure that we get enough fish back, spread out the lake harvest, and help maintain the stream fishery.

Action. The discussion was very brief, but this topic will be raised for discussion at the next LMFT meeting.

### 5) Coping with vacancies

Background (from agenda). It is not clear when or whether existing vacancies (Kubisiak position, Cornell position) in the Lake Michigan program will be filled, and new vacancies are opening up (Lychwick position). Because we may have to live with the vacancies, it might be helpful to discuss how to cope with the situation.

Action. No action taken.

### 6) Sturgeon – 1) Lake Sturgeon Task Group. 2) NER/Lake Michigan coordination. 3) Possible DNR/FWS group.

Background (from agenda). Everybody loves sturgeon. New initiatives are in motion or suggested to coordinate sturgeon restoration activities in Lake Michigan (including Green Bay). Meanwhile we have launched sturgeon restoration in the Manitowoc and Milwaukee Rivers through stocking. Others have raised concerns about our stocking plans. *Lake Sturgeon Task Group.* The Lake Michigan Committee has formed a Lake Sturgeon Task Group (LSTG), with a steering committee made up of Rob Elliot (FWS, Chairman), Fred Binkowski (UWM), Ron Bruch (WDNR), Ed Baker (MDNR), and Marty Holtgren (Little River Band of Ottawa Indians). The LSTG is charged by the Lake Michigan Committee (LMC) with drafting a lakewide sturgeon restoration plan for consideration by the LMC, and with advising the LMC regarding proposals to stock sturgeon in Wisconsin and Illinois. *NER/Lake Michigan coordination.* An internal DNR meeting is scheduled for July 8 to discuss sturgeon issues in the Winnebago system, in Green Bay and its tributaries, and in Lake Michigan tributaries. *Possible DNR/FWS group.* Mike Staggs has asked whether it would be useful to form a DNR/FWS group to coordinate sturgeon activities within Wisconsin. He has received a mostly negative response to the idea.

Action. No action taken.

**7) Walleye and Musky regulations in Lower Menominee River and vicinity**

Background (from agenda). We have been in discussion with the Michigan DNR regarding musky and walleye regulations in the lower Menominee River and adjoining waters of Green Bay. Some regulation changes have been drafted for discussion.

Action. The proposed rules were discussed, along with a memo from Steve Hewett expressing concerns. Justine Hasz will draft a written response to the Hewett memo, fix some remaining bugs in the proposal, and ask for an LMFT endorsement at the next meeting.

**8) Possible use of trout and salmon pens in Menominee River**

Background (from agenda). The M&M sport fishing club would like to explore using trout pens in the Menominee River to hold trout and salmon for 3-4 weeks before they are released. The club would like to fund such a project in hopes of enhancing survival of stocked fish.

Action. No action taken.

**9) Cooperative agreement with commercial fishers to study white perch gill netting in Green Bay**

Background (from agenda). An experimental gill net fishery for white perch has been initiated through a cooperative agreement between the Department and Mark Maricque.

Action. No action taken.

**10) Agreement with Green Bay FRO regarding Green Bay yellow perch data**

Background (from agenda). For the last several months the USFWS's Green Bay Fisheries Resources Office (FRO) has been analyzing data, developing a model, and conducting other Green Bay yellow perch work for the Department under an agreement funded with NRDA money. That agreement expires at the end of the summer with some work still not complete. Justine Hasz has asked the LMFT to discuss whether and how the agreement can be renewed, and what long-term needs we have that the FRO can help with.

Action. Justine Hasz will draft a specific proposal to continue the cooperative agreement, specifying tasks to be completed, the time it will take, and the cost to the Department. The LMFT will then consider endorsing the extended agreement.

**11) Lake Michigan Integrated Fisheries Management Plan**

Background: A final draft of the Lake Michigan Integrated Fisheries Management Plan, 2003-2013 has been completed.

Action: The LMFT endorsed the final draft, which will now be sent to the Guidance Team and then routed for approval by the LMIFMP Policy Support Group and the Secretary.

**12) Rule making – 1) White perch fishery. 2) Green Bay yellow perch quotas. 3) Automate quotas.**

Background: The Green Bay yellow perch commercial harvest limit will revert to 200,000 pounds next July 1, unless a new rule is promulgated. If we want to hold the harvest limit where it is (20,000 pounds), or establish a different harvest limit, we need to initiate a new rule by this fall. We can consider doing some other commercial fishing rule-making in conjunction with such a rule, including formally establishing a white perch fishery (setting harvest limits, establishing gear and season restrictions, etc) and automating commercial quotas.

Action: No action taken.

### **13) Sport fishing advisor to the GLFC**

Background: The position of sport fishing advisor to the GLFC has been vacant since Mel Both passed away. We should recommend a replacement for Mel. Our recommendation, if approved by the Department, would be sent over to the Governor, who would make the formal nomination to the GLFC.

Action: The LMFT recommended Craig Bender, President of Salmon Unlimited of Racine. Bill Horns will call Mr. Bender to see if he would be interested.

### **14) Poor smelt harvest and large incidental catch in winter smelt fishery on Lake Michigan.**

Background: Steve Hogler described the poor smelt trawling and relatively large catch of alewives and bloater chubs during the past winter.

Action. No action taken. Future discussions of this are needed.